PRAYER AND PLAY IN ATJEH:

A Comment on Two Photographs

James Siegel

> O believers, shall I direct you to a
> commerce that shall deliver you from
> a painful chastisement?
> You shall believe in God and His
> Messenger, and struggle in the way of
> God with your possessions and your
> selves. That is better for you,
> did you but know.
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> (A.J.Arberry, The Koran Interpreted,
> Surah LXI:10. London: George Allen
> and Unwin Ltd., 1955.)

The Myths of Creation and the Destruction of the World

The Atjehnese versions of the Islamic myths of the creation and destruction of the world describe man as a creature with two parts to his nature. I want first to talk about these myths and then to describe the expression of man's dual nature in prayer and in an Atjehnese game.

Before God created the world He made the angels (malékat) out of light (nur). The angels had various tasks; some worshipped God, others hauled water, some brought rain. No matter what their tasks they were perfect in carrying them out because there was nothing in their nature that would make them disobedient to God. Since the angels were perfectly faithful to God there was no indication of His omnipotence. If there was a hell at that time it was empty. God therefore made the world as a testing place for a new kind of creature which could be either faithful or disobedient to God. In this way heaven and hell would be filled and God's omnipotence would be demonstrated.

Before making man God created the earth as a place for man to live. The earth and the natural world (alam) were made from nothingness (wab). After making the world in seven days God

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Top Picture: The gathering of geudeu-geudeu players before leaving the field at the end of the game -- taken from center of the circle.

Bottom Picture: A corner of the mosque yard before the beginning of the celebration during the month of the pilgrimage.

created Adam out of earth (tanoh). When man was complete God made Hawa, the first woman, from Adam's rib.

God gave Adam (and hence Adam's descendants) hawa nafsu. Hawa nafsu is the part of man's nature that he shares with the animals. It is everything that arises from within man. Hunger and sexual yearning as well as love for the world are manifestations of hawa nafsu.

When man responds to hawa nafsu he is led away from God. His response to himself leads him away from obedience to God's commands. If man had only hawa nafsu he would not be able to obey God at all. But God also gave man a means to respond to Him--akal, or the ability to know. Akal is close to our conception of rationality. Through the use of akal man can know God's commands and control his (man's) natural nature, hawa nafsu.

It is the struggle between the two parts of his nature that determines man's lot in the next world; some earn paradise, others earn hell. The outcome of the struggle is the evidence of God's omnipotence; heaven and hell are filled.

God did not put Adam directly on earth. Adam and Hawa lived in paradise with the malékat at first. The story of their expulsion explains the meaning of hawa nafsu and akal.

After making Adam, God told the malékat to honor him, and He told them as well that He was going to give the earth to man. The malékat protested. "'Why?' they asked, 'If man is put on earth there will be only bloodshed and destruction. Man has hawa nafsu; he will not be perfectly faithful [to God]'. God, however, had taught Adam the names and uses of things. He called the malékat together and asked them the names of the things of the earth. They did not know. Then Adam recited the names and the uses of the things of the earth, and so demonstrated the superiority of man to the malékat. The malékat then understood why man and not the angels would be given the earth."*

Man is superior to the angels because he has akal. But he is also better suited to earth because he has hawa nafsu. "If the malékat were put on earth no use would be made of the world. They would only sit with their mouths agape, having no desire for anything. They would not use the world."

When God demonstrated the superiority of Adam to the malékat they all honored Adam except one, the iblis. The iblis refused because Adam was made of earth while he and the other malékat were made of light. The iblis therefore had to leave

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* The quotations are statements of Atjehnese.

paradise. Before he left, however, the iblis asked God for someone to go with him. God answered that anyone who wanted to [na meuhadjat, berhadjat] could join him. The iblis therefore tempted Hawa with the forbidden fruit.* They ate and God expelled them from paradise.

The story of creation delineates the two parts of man's nature. Hawa nafsu, or passion, desire, nature itself, leads away from God. The very eating of the fruit was the satisfaction of hawa nafsu and so paradise was lost. Akal, however, makes man superior to the angels; it is the faculty whose use can lead back to paradise. After Adam ate the fruit he asked God to forgive him. God did forgive him and told him that if he and his descendants were faithful to His word He would allow them to return to paradise. By using akal to know the law man can regain paradise.

According to an ulama, "On the last day [of the earth] everything will be destroyed and everyone will die. Then everyone will live again and stand by their graves naked. Each will seek out his prophet. Then the angels will ask us our deeds. Our witnesses will be our own bodies. Our eyes, our hands, our feet will recite our deeds. A balance will be struck and our fate will be determined." Man's acts on earth then determine his fate in the next world. "Heaven," said a merchant, "is the answer to our deeds on earth. So too is Hell."

Man's nature itself is neither good nor evil. It is only acts that are judged. Yet evil acts are the expression of one part of man's nature, hawa nafsu, unmediated by rationality, by akal. Evil as a potential of man's nature is emphasized by the role of the iblis in the eating of the forbidden fruit. How could the iblis have disobeyed God if he did not have hawa nafsu? The answer is that "the iblis did not disobey God; he was perfectly obedient. But had Adam not lived in paradise first the malékat would not have known that Adam was their superior by virtue of having akal." The significance of this is that the iblis was expelled from paradise not for having tempted Adam and Hawa, but for having not recognized that akal made men superior to the malékat. He obeyed God in not honoring Adam so that the malékat could see the significance of akal. In this light the eating of the fruit by Adam and Hawa is more clearly their own responsibility than in Genesis where the serpent is punished for tempting Eve. The lack of responsibility of the iblis for the expulsion of Adam and Hawa is indicated again when God says that anyone who "wants to" can leave with him. It is something within Adam and Hawa that makes them disobey God.

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* In the Koran the iblis tempts Adam first in one version. In two others it is unclear who eats first.

The nature of the temptation shows us something about hawa nafsu. In the Atjehnese myth the fruit is only fruit. It is not the fruit of a special tree of knowledge of good and evil as in Genesis; man already has akal, the faculty of knowing. Nor does the fruit promise eternal life, as in the Koran. In the Atjehnese version Adam and Hawa eat out of pure desire, demonstrating their animal nature, hawa nafsu, and the way hawa nafsu leads away from God.

Religion As A Guide To Akal

The extent to which sinful acts are thought of as the expression of hawa nafsu was demonstrated in a story of an ulama. He said first that if we ever felt a great desire for something and satisfied that desire we would surely commit a sinful act. Then he told us about a learned man who liked to eat meat.

> One day the man went to a feast. Meat was served and he had a great desire to eat it. However he recognized the strength of his desire and so contained himself. He arose, left the feast and went to the market. There he asked the meat seller when the steer had been slaughtered. Sure enough, the beast had not been slaughtered at all; it had died of disease.

I asked the ulama if all desires led to sinful acts. What, for instance, if we had a great urge to read the Koran and did so? "That," he replied, "would be doing a good thing for the wrong reason. Surely we would only be doing it to impress the woman next door." (The Koran is always chanted aloud, easily audible through the walls of Atjehnese houses.)

Hawa nafsu is the cause of all evil acts, yet it is not the curse of original sin. It existed as part of man's nature before he ate the forbidden fruit. It is in itself neither good nor bad. It has good consequences when, motivated by it, man uses the things of the earth in accordance with God's will as known through akal. It leads man to do evil acts when it is unmediated by rationality. In any case it is an immutable part of his nature, impossible to alter.

Man can only try to control hawa nafsu, to make it subservient to rationality. Fortunately God has given man a means to control himself. Through the performance of the five ritual prayers man can achieve the dominance of rationality over hawa nafsu. This is how an ulama explained it:

> God has given us two characteristics [tabiat], hawa nafsu and akal. Akal guides us and restrains us from giving in to hawa nafsu. But akal alone is not sufficient. The sharper akal is the more trouble it can lead us into if it is not guided by religion.

> Religion is a guide to akal and by means of akal we know religion. Without thinking of God and thus of religion akal would mislead us. We would risk our place in the afterworld if it were not for prayer. Therefore God has ordered us to pray.

"Religion is a guide to akal and by means of akal we know religion" in the sense that prayer both puts the believer into a state of control over himself and is itself an exercise of this control. This control of self continues after the prayer is completed so that rationality does not become the mere instrument of hawa nafsu.

Prayer is part of the context of the lives of most Atjehnese men; they seem actually to pray five times daily. There being few negative cases, and these being very difficult to learn about, the statements about the relation of prayer to self control are difficult to confirm from ordinary daily life.* Therefore I want to describe an instance where a man actually lost control of himself and regained self possession by prayer.

The man was Abdullah, a tobacco trader working in a town about five hours away from his own village. He was married to Sjarifah, one of a group of six sisters, cousins and aunts living in adjacent houses. Sjarifah was 26; Abdullah was 35. They had two children; the older was a girl nine years old, the younger a boy about a year and a half. The boy fell sick; for two months he ate less and less, becoming very weak till he could no longer hold his head up. Sjarifah sent for the village curer several times and also took him to the male nurse in the market place.

Both Abdullah and Sjarifah were especially attached to their son. Sjarifah's neighbors said that for a long while she and Abdullah had wanted a second child but she had not been able to conceive. When the boy was seriously ill Sjarifah sent a note to Abdullah asking for money for medicine. Learning that his son was sick Abdullah came home.

About 9:30 one night, a week after Abdullah had returned to the village, there were cries from Sjarifah's house. The boy

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* Of course the Atjehnese know of many nonAtjehnese who do not pray. An ulama said, for instance, that the Chinese exemplify akal as the tool of hawa nafsu. It is interesting too that Atjehnese often pointed out the lack of calmness in strained situations among the Chinese. I was in a boat full of Chinese and Atjehnese crossing a river once when a wave nearly capsized us. The Atjehnese grimly clung to the gunnels while the Chinese clutched each other and shouted. Safely on shore this provoked comment by the Atjehnese.

had just died. His body was laid out on the bed. Sjarifah and all of her female relatives were wailing in the back room. Abdullah was by himself in another room. He had fainted and had just come to. In a few minutes some teen-age boys arrived and were directed by one of the female cousins to write notes to relatives in neighboring villages announcing the death.

By ten o'clock the wailing had decreased somewhat. More relatives had come, including Sjarifah's mother's sister who lived in another part of the village. Each time Sjarifah and her kin began to cry again Sjarifah's aunt would warn them that it was a sin to cry, it was sjétan who provoked them to do such things. Instead of crying they should "Remember that the baby is going back to God. He is going before us. Be glad; the baby is free of sin and will be received by God." In spite of this the crying continued all night. Neither Sjarifah nor any of her female relatives who had cared for the baby during his life could be comforted by such thoughts.

Abdullah, however, immediately regained control of himself. He told us how Sjarifah had noticed that the baby had stopped breathing. "The last four days the baby couldn't swallow. We took it to the male nurse but it didn't help. Then tonight Sjarifah looked at it and it was not breathing. Since then she hasn't stopped crying. That's not right. The baby is free of sin. It will be received by God."

The death was announced to the village the next morning. Learning about it, the village men came to the house to accompany the body to the graveyard. They gathered below the house and talked and smoked as usual. Abdullah was there as well. He was subdued but not much different than usual.

Upstairs, in the back of the house, the body was being washed before burial. Meanwhile Sjarifah and her relatives were still crying. The woman who teaches the girls to read the Koran repeatedly urged them to say "There is no God but God" (the first part of the confession of faith), but none of them listened to her and she herself occasionally dissolved into tears.

When the body was wrapped the men recited the special prayer said before burial. They brought the body to the graveyard for a further service and buried it. The women stayed behind in the house.

For the next seven days men came to the house every night to recite the Koran in honor of the dead boy. There was also a feast so that, according to Sjarifah, she could recognize the boy on the Day of Judgment and they could go to paradise together.

Sjarifah did not stop grieving for her son for at least a month after that. Though she no longer cried continually, she

secluded herself in the house. She was seldom alone, however, one of her female relatives usually being with her. Together they mourned without the cautions that mourning is sinful. Abdullah, however, refused to give in to himself. Just 30 days after the boy died he said:

> Last week, the night before Lebaran, I woke up and found Sjarifah crying. 'Don't do that,' I said, 'it is the work of the devil. When the child comes into your mind you should do away with the thought by reading the Koran or by praying. To carry on like that is sinful.' I told her the story of Ibrahim and Ismael. If God asked for the son of a prophet how can we complain if He asked for our child? We should be happy he died so young and is free of sin. The next day [Lebaran] Ainsjah [his daughter] and I went to visit my mother. Sjarifah would not come [as she should have on Lebaran]. She stayed home and cried. If an ulama sees anyone mourning he gets angry immediately. It is sinful. I loved my son but I won't grieve. When I think of him I pray or read the Koran instead.

Whenever Abdullah felt himself about to surrender to what arose within him he prayed or read the Koran. This is what the ulama meant by "religion is a guide to akal." The recitation of the prayers put Abdullah into a state of full possession of akal. That it did have this effect is shown by his complete social acceptability. From the time he recovered from the first shock he maintained a state of being that allowed him to act and be accepted as any other man. The striking difference between him and Sjarifah was that he was able to act and was treated in a normal fashion whereas she was considered to be in an altogether different and unacceptable state. Her own response to herself, shared by her relatives, was not considered a normal reaction to death.* She was not permitted to grieve; she did so in spite of attempts to prevent her. That she herself found this socially unacceptable is demonstrated by her refusal to visit her mother-in-law on Lebaran and her self-imposed seclusion. None of her actions were considered "customary" (part of adat); they were sympathized with by some of the women, though not by any of the men and certainly not by her husband. The contrast between Sjarifah and Abdullah is the contrast of the expression of hawa nafsu and of akal.

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* Normal in the sense of what is valued, not in terms of what happens statistically. Women often grieve and always are warned and chastised for doing so.

Akal As A Guide To Religion: The Nature And Function Of Prayer

Abdullah's response to the death of his son illustrates "religion as a guide to akal." But to know how "akal is a guide to religion" we must look at prayer itself. Prayer is not a communication with God in the ordinary sense. God is completely transcendent, unapproachable by man. Muhammed was the seal of prophecy. What is left to man is what He has already revealed. Man can only try to retain an awareness of Him. "We are always in the presence of God" said an ulama, "but in prayer there are no distractions." Man makes himself aware of God by conforming himself to His commands. The five daily prayers require complete command of body and mind; absolute control of self, absolute conformation of the muscles of the body and the thoughts of the mind to an outer form are required for a prayer to be valid.

Prayer begins with ritual purification. Certain kinds of contaminations such as touching a pig or a dog can only be cleansed by a complete bath. Usually, however, it is sufficient to be free of all bodily excretions and to wash the face from forehead to beneath the chin and from ear to ear, the feet and the arms up to the elbows and to wet the hair. Before these ablutions one must say to oneself "Because of God I wash myself as is my duty." This can be said in Atjehnese. After washing one is ready to pray.*

Several things can invalidate the state of ritual purity necessary for prayer. One can not get dirty, for instance, or do anything that might leave one in less than full possession of akal. Falling asleep, touching the skin of a woman, getting dizzy or going insane make one unfit to pray.

The spot on which a Muslim is about to pray should be clean. Atjehnese often use prayer mats but this is not required. If an Atjehnese is to pray outdoors, for instance, he first cleans off a spot of ground. The prayer must, of course, be recited while facing toward Mecca.

The times the prayers may be recited are daybreak (subuh)- from the time the first rays of the sun are visible till the sun has risen-; noon (zuhur)- from the time the sun is at its zenith till the shadow of a stick stuck vertically into the ground is the same length as the stick itself-; afternoon (ashar)- from zuhur till sunset-; sunset (mohgréb)- from the time the sun sets till its rays are no longer visible-; and isja- from

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* There is a further condition that the body be covered. The minimal regulation is that the body be covered from waist to knees. No one, however, prays without a shirt.

darkness till daybreak. While the times are specified it can be seen that there is great leeway for all but the daybreak and sunset prayers.

The prayers differ from each other only in the number of raka'at or "bowings" which compose them, not in content. The recitation of the prayer begins with a silent declaration of intent, such as "It is my intention to perform the obligatory zuhur prayers with four raka'at because of God the sublime." This can be said in Atjehnese but after this everything must be said in Arabic with the proper pronunciation. Most Atjehnese have no understanding of Arabic but they are very concerned about pronouncing the words correctly. A word incorrectly pronounced invalidates the prayer. Atjehnese are taught the meaning of the prayers and are told to concentrate on the meaning while pronouncing the Arabic.

The concern for exact pronunciation is duplicated in the concern for correct postures. An incorrectly struck posture invalidates the prayer.*

After the niat, which is said standing, the hands are raised to the height of the ears with the fingers open and the palms toward each other. While doing this "God is most great" [Allahu Akbar] is said. Then the hands are folded over the waist, the right over the left, while the first surah of the Koran is chanted:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise Belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,
the All-merciful, the All-compassionate,
the Master of the Day of Doom.

Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour.
Guide us in the straight path,
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,
nor of those who are astray.

(Arberry trans., op. cit., I, 29)

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* I asked an Atjehnese friend once why the Atjehnese walked and stood so erectly. He said that it was because of the training they got as boys when learning how to pray.

Atjehnese frequently comment on the pronunciation and postures of strangers during prayer, sometimes to the point of generalizing about ethnic groups in terms of their precision in prayer.

After this surah is recited any surah from the Koran may follow. A common one is entitled "Sincere Religion":

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Say: 'He is God, One,
God, the Everlasting Refuge,
who has not begotten, and has not been begotten,
and equal to Him is not anyone.'

(Arberry trans., op. cit., II,361)

If this surah is recited during the first raka'at it is best if another is recited during the second. "The Afternoon" seems to be frequently used here:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

By the Afternoon!
Surely Man is in the way of loss,
save those who believe, and do righteous deeds,
and counsel each other unto the truth, and counsel each other to be steadfast.

(Arberry trans., op. cit., II,352)

A bow is then made from the waist while saying "Allahu Akbar." When bowing the hands are raised again as when saying "Allahu Akbar" at the beginning of the prayer. When the trunk is parallel to the ground the hands are placed on the knees and the face looks toward the ground. Then "God is the most pure and the most great. Praise be to God" is said.* After this one stands erect again. While rising one repeats "Hear God, those who praise You." When fully erect, arms hanging straight down, one continues, "Praise belongs to God. Our praise fills the heavens and the earth and anything else You wish." After this a full bow is made by lowering oneself first to one's knees, then putting one's hands on the ground palm downward and lowering the nose and forehead to the ground. In this position one says, "God, the highest, is the purest. All praise belongs to God." This phrase is recommended but not obligatory; it may be repeated from three to eleven times.

The bow is repeated. During the first raka'at one sits between bows with one's legs tucked under the trunk. In the sitting position the thighs must be parallel to each other and the feet crossed, the left foot under the right, and the right sole perpendicular to the ground. The back must be straight and the hands should be placed over the knees. While sitting one says "Allahu Akbar" and then says:

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* This phrase is recommended (sunat) but not obligatory.

Forgive me God, be merciful to me.
Correct my weaknesses and raise my sight.
Give me livelihood and guide me.
Give me health and pardon my errors.

This concludes one raka'at. Then the raka'ats are repeated up to the number prescribed for each prayer. The prayer ends with the confession of faith and the pronouncement of the greeting "assalaimu aleichum warachmatullah."

Prayer can only begin with the believer in full possession of akal. Anything that lessens that state makes him unfit to pray. The prayer itself is not the expression but the control of inner promptings. Each word must be pronounced accurately, each motion must be made precisely and each posture held exactly.

Prayer is not a ritual means of making a request of God. One prays because it is, literally, one's sacred duty, complete in itself. The emphasis on precision is not due to fear that some end outside of prayer will not be attained if the ritual is improperly performed (except, of course, that one will be punished for not praying). There is a request made. ["Correct my weaknesses and raise my sight..."], but it is a very general one and can not be considered the reason for prayer itself.* Rather the request that is made is like the recitation of the other words of the prayer. The words are to the mind what the motions are to the body--they are a form to which one accomodates oneself. Atjehnese are taught to fill their minds with the meaning of the Arabic words and so to exclude any other thoughts that might rise within their minds. In this way they obliterate anything coming from within them, physically as well as mentally, and so give themselves over, "surrender" (the meaning of "Islam") themselves to God.**

In one sense the lack of initiative allowed the believer in prayer seems a denial of akal. He must recite what is given him to recite, only being allowed to add surahs at certain points. But it is this very arbitrary character that expresses the self

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* It is true that a line can be added for one's parents at the end of prayer. But this is in Arabic and like the rest of prayer is treated with the emphasis on precision. One can ask God for things, but this is doa (which Poerwadarminta defines as request - permohonan -) not prayer (sembajang).

** The effectiveness of this is seen when Atjehnese pray in public places such as the market. They seem to remove themselves completely from their surroundings, giving no indication of knowing what happens around them while they pray.

control of the believer. Prayer is not an outpouring of inner feeling but the believer's conformation of himself to God's commands. By making his words and actions, literally his whole mind and body, fit God's prescriptions he enacts in a sacred context what is required of him in secular life afterwards. In this way prayer is an intense, sacred microcosm of the larger world that precedes and follows it. It at once demonstrates the believer's freedom by his conscious control of his actions, triumphing over that part of his self that urges him to do otherwise, and his submission to God in the performance of the acts themselves. The intensity, the sacred character and especially the symbolism of "giving-over" of self in prayer perhaps explain how Abdullah could so effectively re-enter the secular world of akal.*

Through prayer men make themselves into rational beings in control of their own actions. They thus distinguish themselves from animals as well as from children (aneuk) who do not yet have a fully developed rational faculty, who therefore do not yet pray and who are not yet people (ureung).

The promise of prayer is that with the control of hawa nafsu rationality will govern the relations of men. All of the ties between men will express their religious selves. The meaning of the great Islamic celebrations of the fasting month and the pilgrimage as well as of the religious payments (zakat) is that all of the relations of men to each other will be defined in rational, Islamic terms.** No attribute of status such as wealth will define moral worth apart from its use in the proper, rational way. No relationship will be right in and of itself. Even, for instance, the relationship of father and son will express religious duty, will manifest rationality.

Prayer is, as it were, a framework within which men struggle with themselves in order to realize one part of their nature, rationality. It is this quality, rationality, that is requisite to the performance of all social roles. It is, therefore, never necessary to transform, to remake the self, in order to take on new statuses. There are no rites of passage in Islam as practiced in Atjeh; there is only prayer.*** Man's dual nature remains with

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* The reading of the Koran requires the same precision as prayer.

** There is no place here to develop this theme in the way it deserves. It is, however, the subject of another paper as yet unpublished.

*** It is true that there are ceremonies, for instance, at marriage and at death, but precisely because these ceremonies do not claim to remake the person, to put him into a new state of being appropriate to a new moral world, that I hesitate to call them rites of passage. What the ceremonies in effect say is that men must maintain the same state of being at all times, as we saw with Abdullah.

him, periodically controlled or, better, realigned, through prayer so that hawa nafsu is subservient to akal. The promised result, the rationally governed relations of men on earth, undisrupted by the passions that set men against each other, was expressed by one Atjehnese writer in this metaphor: "Men want to bind themselves together with the rope of God, the rope which neither rots in the rain nor cracks in the sun."*

There is no place here to show the nature of the bonds of rationality, but I do want to describe their expression at the great public prayer meetings during the celebrations of the end of the fasting month and the pilgrimage. The meetings were held outside a mosque that was being built in Pidie regency. As many as 8,000 to 9,000 people attended them. The land surrounding the mosque is still a field, with dips and rises. One can sometimes see a cow or two grazing there on weekdays. There are piles of gravel and sand and building materials. But the disorder of nature and man is ignored in the meetings themselves. Row after row after row of men align themselves, continuing on the other side of a gravel heap, pushing aside stray rocks and stones, the evenness of the line unbroken by its ascent over small slopes. Wearing black velvet caps (pitji), clean sarongs and (usually) white shirts, they go through the motions of prayer in the same way and at the same time despite the heat and glare of the sun. The sermon, broadcast through loud-speakers, is easily audible in the furthest corners of the field. No noise, no restlessness interrupts its echo. The uniformities of dress, posture and motion express rational order. The imposition of this order on the confusion of the unfinished mosque yard and its maintenance despite the midday heat expresses the control of nature, of hawa nafsu.**

An Atjehnese Game

I want to turn now to the expression of akal and hawa nafsu in an Atjehnese game. During the time between the rice harvest and the new planting in July, 1963, some villagers in Pidie regency began playing a game called geudeu-geudeu. The game had not been played since the '30s but within two weeks villagers all over Pidie were playing and watching it. As many as 5,000 spectators watched a single match. The regent (bupati) sponsored

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* A. So'dy, "The Dawn of Consciousness Breaks on the Horizon of the land of the Rentjong [Atjeh]," Penjoeloeh, October, 1941.

** Please look at the photograph on page 1.

a game in Sigli as did a district chief (wedana). Then, in the third week, a leading ulama requested that the game be discontinued.*

Before the war the local nobility (uléebelang) sponsored the matches, most of them retaining their own teams. As Snouck Hurgronje described the game in 1883 the two teams, each with the same number of players, lined up on opposite sides of a field.** A player from one team pushed a member of the opposite team and then fled to a line in back of him. The opposing players tried to catch him; if they caught him before he reached the line he was "dead." If the player got to the line safely the man he pushed was "dead." When an entire team was dead the teams changed roles, the pushers becoming the catchers. Atjehnese who remember the game say that there was a lot of betting on the outcome.

In its revived form geudeu-geudeu is almost a new game. There is no winning or losing and the teams no longer represent localities, anyone being able to play on either team.***

The game is played on the dry rice fields in an area about the width of a football field, though only half as long. The teams line up opposite each other. The players usually strip down to their shorts, though some still wear trousers. They all take off their shirts and singlets. In addition to the players there are also officials. There is no special number of either players or officials. There are usually between 25 and 50 players and about half a dozen officials. The officials may remove their shirts but never their singlets and never their long pants. The spectators crowd behind the players and along the sides of the fields.

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* He gave as his reason that people who should have been working on a public works project he was directing were going instead to geudeu-geudeu matches. This was true but there was opposition to the game itself as well. For instance, before the ulama asked that the game be stopped one of the referees asked me not to mention his participation to the ulama. The reason for this opposition I hope will be clear before the end of the paper.

** Cf. The Achehnese (O'Sullivan, translator, E.J.Brill, Leiden, 1906). Snouck speaks of matches between villagers but does not mention uléebelang in this connection. See also "meugeudeu-geudeu" in Djajadiningrat, Atjehsch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek (Lansdrukkerij, Batavia, 1934). The game is mentioned as well in J. Kreemer, Atjeh, (E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1922-23), I, 404. The later work derives from Snouck.

*** In its new form geudeu-geudeu perhaps is no longer a game. For an anthropological classification of games see Roberts, Arth and Bush, "Games in Culture," American Anthropologist, Vol. 61, No. 4 (August, 1959).

The game begins when a player from either team walks to the center of the field. This man is known as the ureung tueng. (Ureung means "man;" tueng means "willingness to take on.") The opponents of the ureung tueng are the ureung peo'.* (Peo' means both "collide" and "hit.") When the ureung tueng has announced himself by taking his place on the field two ureung peo' from the other team go out to meet him. Like the ureung tueng, the ureung peo' only play if they feel the desire to do so. The players do not take ordered turns. When the ureung tueng gets to the middle of the field he often lies prone facing the opposing team, silently daring them to meet his challenge. If no ureung peo' arise he may walk across the field and go up and down their ranks with a slow, stylized lope. Usually however the urueng peo' come out to meet him, often walking hand in hand at a sharp pace. As they approach, the ureung tueng raises his trunk, supporting himself on the tips of his toes and his fingers. The ureung peo' separate, approaching from different sides. They crouch slightly, their arms extended, looking something like wrestlers about to begin a match. The ureung tueng shifts to his feet. The ureung peo' close in. The ureung tueng lunges at one of them, swinging with a round house. The ureung peo' at once try to avoid the blow and to crash down on top of him. At the moment of contact the officials rush in to pull them apart. If a contestant feels especially buoyant he may return to the sidelines with a kind of bound, yelling in a drawn out cowboy fashion. This is a single match. A game consists of four or five hours of matches, ending with the exhaustion of everyone concerned.

The marked characteristic of the game is the spontaneity of the players. The ureung tueng takes the field only because he feels moved to do so. The players do not take ordered turns. The first person to arise is the ureung tueng. If no one gets up the game stops until some one player feels the urge. The ureung peo' are challenged by the ureung tueng; only those who feel the desire to do so go out to meet him. Spontaneity is seen again in the nature of the rules. Immediately after contact of the opponents fighting should stop. In fact few players separate themselves; they are nearly all pulled apart by the officials. Nor are they penalized or in any way thought less of for fighting longer than they should. No one expects them to do

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* Compare Snouck, there the players are called tham, "to withstand" and drob, "to catch," op. cit.

Top Picture: The geudeu-geudeu match in Sigli. The ureung tueng on the left awaits the approach of the ureung peo'.

Bottom Picture: A view from the grandstand of the Sigli football field. The ureung tueng on the left is about to hit the attacking ureung peo'. The referees are closing in.

otherwise. The job of the officials is precisely to pull the players apart, not to see that the players obey the rules themselves. The officials stop the action not because a moment's contact is sufficient to demonstrate the skill of the opponents, but because it is considered dangerous to fight even for that moment, much less longer. Officials frequently tell each other how important it is that the play be stopped just as contact is made; they never tell this to the players. Boxing referees penalize fighters for breaking rules which boxers are thought to be capable of keeping; geudeu-geudeu officials impose a safeguard on players not capable of controlling themselves. They are like lifeguards on the sea shore who intervene only to save people from forces beyond their control.

The work of the officials is, in fact, only the maintenance of safety. They do not initiate the play, they do not keep rules in the ordinary sense. They only stop the action once it has begun. The officials are almost not part of the game. Originally they were village headmen who merely came along, according to Snouck,"to prevent all serious violence."* Even now there is no term to designate them. The rules, then, are not the terms of the game, they are only a means of preventing spontaneity from resulting in serious injury.

The expression of natural feeling is seen as well in the movements of the players. The openness of the swing and the abandon of the leap at the moment of contact are the opposite of the precise motions of prayer. This is true also of the spring and lilt of players returning to their teams after a match.

Conclusion

Islam in its Atjehnese variant says that man has a dual nature. Through the struggle with his nature man is able to accommodate himself to God's commands. There is no redemption of man's nature in Islam; his nature in its full duality always remains part of him. But prayer is a means to realign the components of self so that hawa nafsu is controlled by akal. Prayer is not an isolated religious exercise. It is what enables man to control hawa nafsu in order to use akal to regulate his relations with others in accordance with God's commands. Control of hawa nafsu by akal enables man to achieve moral worth; it is the source of the ability to be part of society and so is the foundation of identity and unity with other men.

Geudeu-geudeu, however, gives full expression to hawa nafsu. "The game is true, genuine fighting, exhausting the energies of

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* Ibid.

everyone," an Atjehnese said. The energy is hawa nafsu. It is what contrasts with the angels who, if they were on earth, "would only sit with their mouths agape, having no desire for anything." What the man means by "true, genuine fighting" is that the consequences are serious. This could not be doubted by anyone seeing the game, but it was proven by the death of one of the players after getting a blow to the head. The conflict and the danger of the fighting remind one of the response of the angels when they learned that man, with hawa nafsu, was going to be put on earth--"If man is put on earth there will be only bloodshed and destruction."

In prayer outer form is imposed on inner feeling; in geudeu-geudeu spontaneity, hawa nafsu, dissolves outer form. This is evident in the nature of the rules, which are imposed by others rather than being the responsibility of the players. It is clear as well in the rhythm of the game. As the matches go on the pace increases. There is less wariness in the attack. The officials have a more difficult time pulling the players apart. The crowd grows more excited, yelling and jumping at the moment of contact and delighting in the difficulties of the officials trying to stop the action. As hawa nafsu is more pristinely expressed the danger of the game increases. The danger is much talked about, but never as an effect of the skill of the players. No one, for instance, comments on their relative ability or remarks on their sheer daring in playing at all. The players remain anonymous, the danger and excitement increasing solely with the progress of the matches themselves. Finally the officials, in the interest of safety, stop the game for a few minutes. Turning toward the crowd and players, their arms raised and their voices full of urgency, the officials excitedly tell them to pijoh, pijoh, i.e., calm down, cool off, rest a bit. When control appears regained, the game is resumed.

The rhythm of the game suggests that geudeu-geudeu, like prayer, realigns the components of self, though, of course, in an inverse way. It is as though hawa nafsu can not be expressed directly; there must be a gradual building up till akal, the filter of hawa nafsu, is nearly dispensed with. The rhythm indicates progression toward a "break through" where there is pure spontaneity. It is at this point that the officials stop the game out of fear that loss of akal, the ability to accommodate oneself to outer form, will mean chaos.

Direct expression of hawa nafsu results in sinful acts. It is this, I think, that explains why the representation of hawa nafsu takes the form of a game. In play, according to Roger Callois, the player "demarcates the play area ... in order to make it evident that it is a privileged space, ruled by specific conventions in which acts have meaning only within that context.... One knows that here things have only the importance one has assigned

to them."* Play is not serious, it is "only a game." The player draws lines within which something goes on that is defined as being of no consequence. But in this case the lines are drawn in order to represent something outside the moral order. That the guise was penetrated, the game found to be not "only a game" is indicated by the banning of it by the ulama.**

That hawa nafsu is represented at all, much less in such an odd game as geudeu-geudeu, is perhaps an ethnographic curiosity. I think, though, that we can not understand it unless we see that its expression is in the interest of something. The expression of hawa nafsu in an unmediated form means the giving up of social identity, which in Atjeh is thought of as the result of rationality finding and obeying the commands of God. We see the erasure of social identity not only in the expression of spontaneity itself, but also in the conception of "team" which is not a team at all since there is no sense of identity between team mates. The teams do not represent localities or any social units. They do not even represent themselves the way a sand-lot baseball team, drawn up on a moment's notice, does. The members of both teams respond the same way to the same matches, neither side feeling itself represented by its players. Furthermore there is no order of play between team mates or between teams. Whoever takes the field first is the ureung tueng of that match. The stripping of social identity is seen again in the nakedness of the players. Men working in rice fields often hitch their sarongs around their waist and so expose their shorts, but Atjehnese never bare their chests in public. The erasure of social identity is seen again in the muteness of the game. The players do not speak. The ureung tueng challenges the ureung peo' with the motions of his body, but never with taunts or verbal abuse. The players on the side-lines may shout and yell, but they do not shout words. The only voiced sound of the players comes when, returning to the sidelines, they sometimes let out a wordless cry.

We see the sense of this at the end of the game. Before the players leave the field they gather together in a circle. Their overheated bodies pressed against each other, they listen as the officials tell them to pijoh. They are told to calm themselves before going home. When they leave, they should leave the game behind them. No one should be angry because of anything that happened during the game; they should bear no grudges. Yet the

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* Man and the Sacred (Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1959), 158.

** This interpretation is given credence by the fact that when geudeu-geudeu was played in its original form modernist Islam was not yet the religion of Atjeh. It was only after the introduction of the concepts of akal and hawa nafsu in the sense I have described them that the game was revived and modified.

closeness of their bodies, the spirit of union between them, seemsto make the words of the officials unnecessary. The mood is not one of opposition but of solidarity. It is here perhaps that we find the reason the game is played. It is as though by giving up the social part of themselves they have found a new unity.* The natural part of man, involving danger and conflict, offers as well ties between men. The compressed mass of players indicates a bond of nature as well as a rope of God with which men strive to link themselves.**

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* Victor Turner has pointed out the solidarity created among initiands in rites of passage when, in the period between statuses, they meet solely as people, not in their structured capacities. "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage." (Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society, 1964).

** Please look at the photograph on page 1.